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ABSTRACT

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) of the Austin Independent School District employed three project specialists to work with at-risk and delinquent middle and high school students in 1989-90. Project specialists worked at two locations: the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) located at the Ridgeview Campus and the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center located at Gardner-Betts House (GBH). SCGC was designed to help these at-risk students improve in the areas of school attendance, academic achievement, behavior, and frequency of contacts with the court system. An evaluation of the program determined that: (1) enrollment at GBH (N=715) increased by 27 percent in 1989-90 with a student-teacher ratio of 15:1; (2) recidivism had increased; (3) follow-up data suggest that attending ALC had no effect on academic performance; (4) insubordination, truancy, fighting, and obscene language were the most common referral categories; (5) a new practice resulted in the transfer of 151 overage middle school students to the ALC; (6) while few students wanted to remain at the ALC another semester, more than one-half were more confident about staying in school and most believed that their behavior had improved; and (7) few of the school district's employees had a positive view of the ALC. (Program statistics are included in graphs, figures, and tables. The student agreement form, attendance contract, goal setting form, and list of community agencies utilized by the SCGC are attached.) (ABL)

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The School-Community Guidance Center:

An Alternative Education Program for High-Risk Students

1989-90

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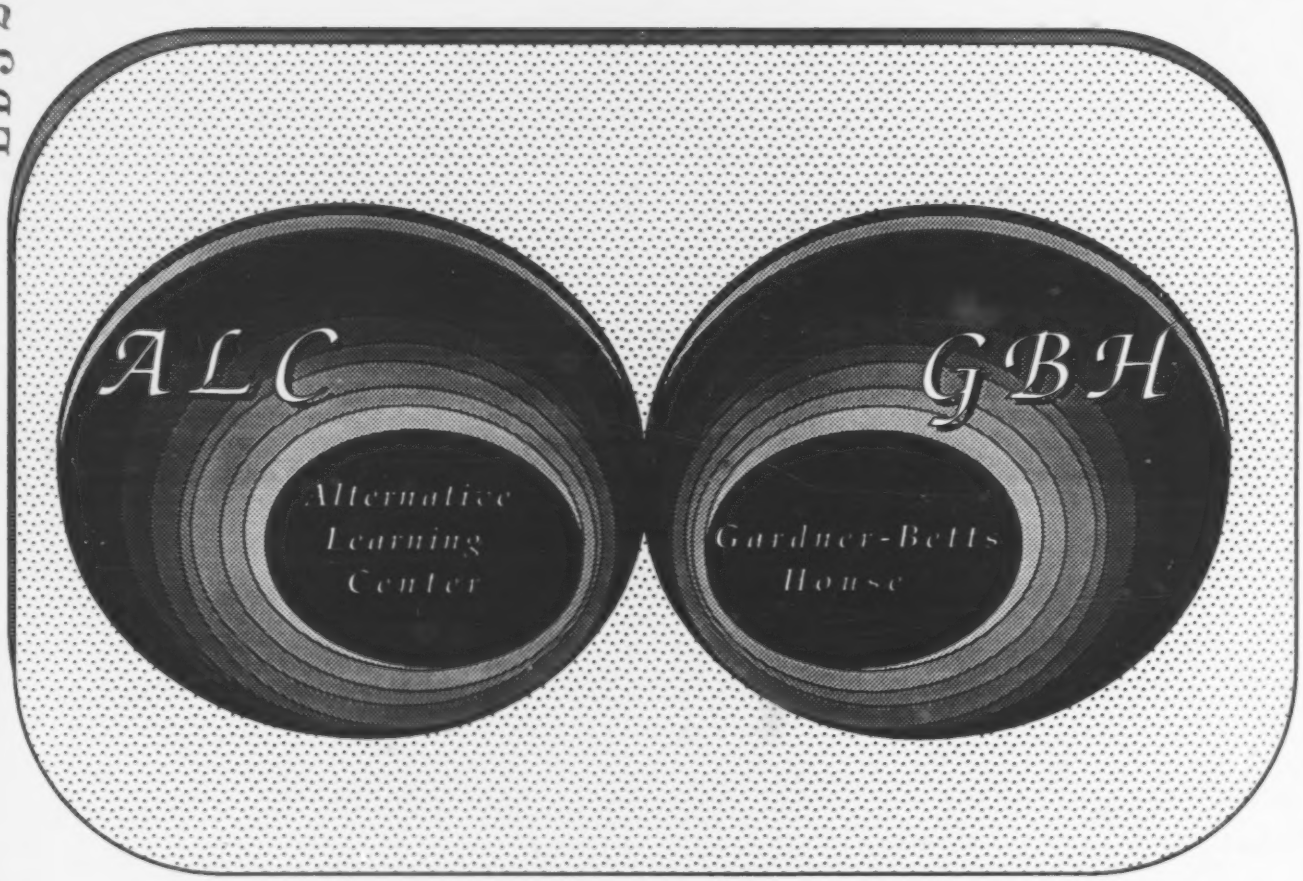

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School-Community Guidance Center: An Alternative Education Program for High-Risk Students

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUTHORS: Lesley Anne Swanson, Lydia Williams-Robertson

Program Description

Funded by a $100,000 grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) employed three project specialists to work with at-risk and delinquent students in 1989-90. Project specialists worked at two locations: the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) located at the Ridgeview Campus and the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center located at Gardner-Betts House (GBH).

SCGC was designed to help these at-risk students improve in the areas of school attendance, academic achievement, behavior, and frequency of contacts with the court system.

Major Findings

1. Enrollment at GBH (N=715) increased by 27% in 1989-90. As a result, the 15:1 student-teacher ratio at GBH remains above the State-recommended 10:1, although an additional teacher was hired this year.

2. Recidivism has increased. In 1989-90, 1 in 4 (26%) SCGC students had been to the ALC before, compared with 1 in 5 (18%) in 1988-89.

3. Follow-up data on first-time SCGC students, 12 weeks after exiting, suggest that attending the ALC has no effect on academic performance (38% improved grades, 38% worse grades), and may have a negative effect on attendance (34% improved attendance, 43% worse attendance).

4. Insubordination (58%), truancy (36%), fighting (29%), and obscene language (21%) were the most common referral categories. The more serious offenses (assault, weapons use, theft, drugs/alcohol, and vandalism) showed little or no increase in frequency since 1988-89.

5. A new practice by Secondary Education resulted in the transfer of 151 overage middle school students to the ALC. These students comprise 22% of the ALC population.

6. Student survey responses indicate that while few students (6%) want to remain at the ALC another semester, more than half (61%) were more confident about staying in school, and most (70%) believed that their behavior had improved.

7. Surveys of AISD teachers, professional staff and administrators indicate that few AISD employees (13%) have a positive view of the ALC. More than half (58%) had no opinion, and more than one quarter (29%) had a negative view.

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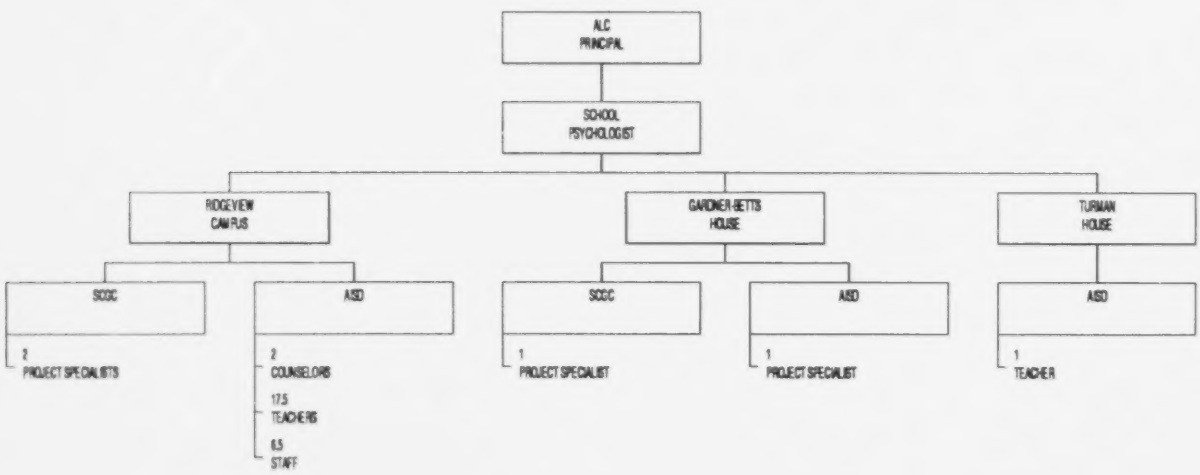
ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The District's program for behavior-problem, overage, and delinquent secondary students has finally found a permanent name, and a permanent home: the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) located at the Ridgeview Campus. After being housed at several locations over the past five years, the program moved into spacious though older quarters previously leased by the District to Austin Community College. Approximately $1,000,000 worth of facility repairs and renovations are currently under way.

Not all the District's high-risk students are taught at the Ridgeview Campus. Three staff members are assigned to work with delinquent youth at other facilities (see Figure 1). The remaining faculty--17.5 teachers, 2 counselors, 2 project specialists, and 6.5 staff--are located at the ALC's Ridgeview Campus. In addition, one half-time evaluation associate is located at AISD's Office of Research and Evaluation.

FIGURE 1
ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



School-Community Guidance Center

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) Program has been a part of AISD's alternative education center since fall, 1984. Established to serve the District's adjudicated and delinquent youth--all of whom are considered at high risk of dropping out--the program is funded for 1989-90 by a $100,000 grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). SCGC students are served at two locations.

Alternative Learning Center

Located at the Ridgeview Campus, the ALC serves high-risk AISD secondary students removed from their home campuses:

1. Through a disciplinary hearing, and
2. As special assignment students.

Two project specialists (funded by the SCGC grant) and two counselors (funded by AISD) are located at the ALC.

Gardner-Betts House

Two project specialists (one funded by SCGC, and one funded by SCGC) are located at Gardner-Betts House (GBH), the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center in central Austin, to serve students detained by the police. In addition, one half-time project specialist was funded by SCGC to teach summer school in 1990.

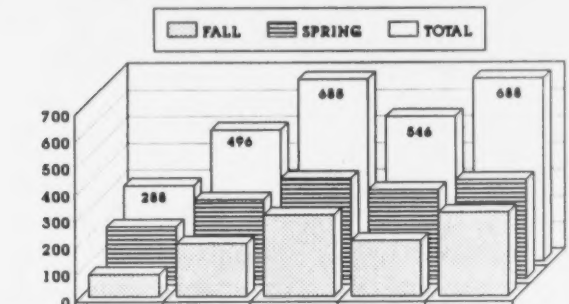
Turman House

One AISD teacher is located at Turman House, a halfway house operated by the Texas Youth Commission for delinquents on probation. Turman House does not receive SCGC services and will not be evaluated in this report.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment at the ALC is up from last year (see Swanson, 1990). Overall enrollment for the ALC--which includes both SCGC (N=537) and special assignment students (N=151)--reached 688 in 1989-90, a 26% increase over last year (1988-89). Of these, 118 (17% of overall enrollment) have had prior contact with the court system. This is a duplicated count, of the 581 individual students enrolled in 1989-90, 107 (18%) were enrolled in both semesters.

FIGURE 2
ALC FIVE-YEAR ENROLLMENT TRENDS
1985-86 THROUGH 1989-90

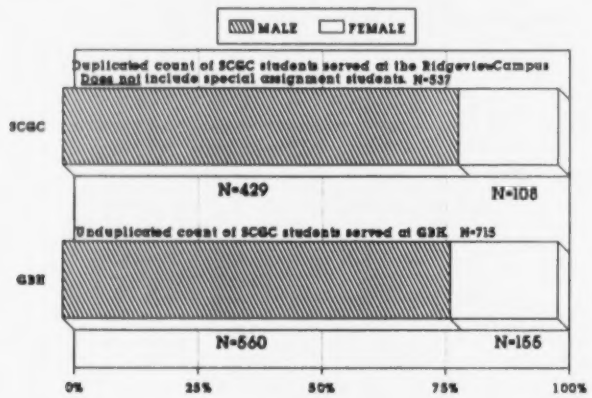


	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90
TOTAL	288	496	688	546	688
SPRING	197	298	378	336	373
FALL	85	198	307	210	315

Duplicated count includes both SCGC and special assignment students served at the ALC. Does not include SCGC students served at GBH.

Figure 3 shows SCGC enrollment at the ALC and GBH by gender.

FIGURE 3
SCGC ENROLLMENT BY FACILITY AND GENDER, 1989-90

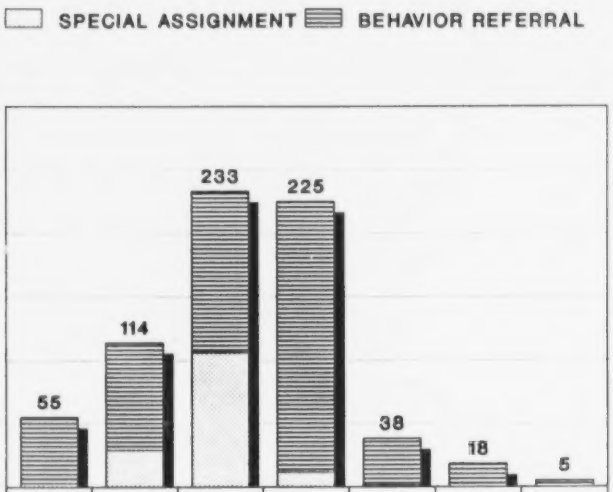


Overall, many more boys (79%) than girls (21%) were served.

Behavior-Problem Students

Students in grades 6-12 may be assigned to the ALC for disciplinary reasons at any time during the semester (see AISD'S Discipline Management Plan for information on referral procedures). These students accounted for 78% of the 1989-90 enrollment. Assignment is typically for the duration of the semester of referral. Students removed during the last six weeks of a semester may be assigned for the following semester as well. Behavior-problem students may be included in the School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) Program funded by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). See Figure 4 for enrollment by grade.

FIGURE 4
ALC ENROLLMENT BY GRADE



	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
BEHAVIOR REFERRAL	52	85	127	213	37	18	5
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT	3	29	106	12	1	0	0

Special Assignment Students

Effective the 1989-90 school year, 151 special assignment students were transferred to the ALC. This group included middle school students who were overage for their grade, returning dropouts, and students who were not successful in other alternative programs. Students may subsequently return to their home schools or other AISD placement.

HOME SCHOOLS

Students came to the ALC from all of the District's 10 high, 2 junior high, 11 middle schools, and 1 non traditional secondary school (Robbins). Figure 5 lists their home schools in order by number of referrals. Pearce Middle School remains at the top the list this year, referring a total of 63 students, an increase of 43% since 1988-89. Reagan High School replaced Porter Middle School (second on last year's list), with a total of 46 referrals, an increase of 142% over last year. As shown, the percentage of those who are referred also varies by school, with Pearce (7.0%) and Porter (4.2%) Middle Schools referring the highest percentages of their own enrollment and Covington Middle School (.8%) and Bowie High School (.5%) the lowest percentages.

FIGURE 5
HOME SCHOOLS OF ALC STUDENTS, 1989-90

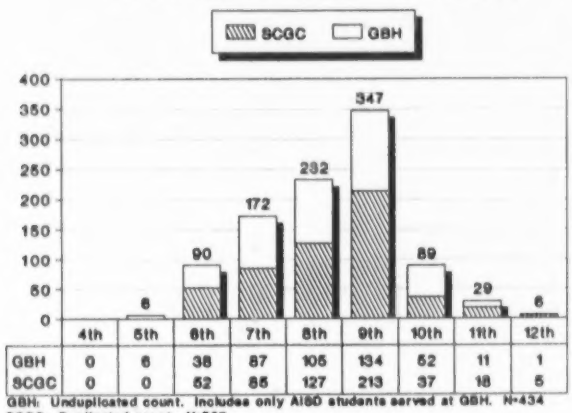
School	Membership	# to ALC	% of School	% of ALC
Pearce MS	894	63	7.0%	9.1%
Reagan HS	1347	46	3.4%	6.7%
Porter MS	1046	44	4.2%	6.4%
Austin HS	1664	33	2.0%	4.8%
Lanier HS	1450	32	2.2%	4.6%
Johnston HS	1633	29	1.8%	4.2%
Murchison MS	1033	29	2.8%	4.2%
Burnet MS	999	25	2.5%	3.6%
Mendez MS	1013	25	2.5%	3.6%
LBJ HS	1333	24	1.8%	3.5%
Lamar MS	798	22	2.7%	3.2%
Crockett HS	1756	21	1.2%	3.0%
McCallum HS	1282	20	1.6%	2.9%
O. Henry MS	690	18	2.6%	2.6%
Bedichek MS	1031	17	1.6%	2.5%
Martin JHS	780	16	2.0%	2.3%
Travis HS	1334	14	1.0%	2.0%
Anderson HS	1338	13	1.0%	1.9%
Bowie HS	2119	12	.5%	1.7%
Fulmore MS	864	12	1.4%	1.7%
Dobie MS	873	11	1.3%	1.6%
Covington MS	1315	10	.8%	1.4%
Robbins SS	259	10	3.9%	1.4%
Kealing JHS	796	8	1.0%	1.2%

Unduplicated count of both special assignment, and behavior-problem students served at the ALC (N=581). Based on a count of membership as of October 6, 1989. Students from Texas Youth Commission and returning dropouts are not included.

S C H O O L - C O M M U N I T Y G U I D A N C E C E N T E R

Enrollment at both the Ridgeview campus and GBH is up from last year (see Swanson, 1990). When the new Travis County Juvenile Detention Center opened in October, 1989, juveniles who, in the past year had been sent to other facilities for security reasons, returned to GBH and were counted as SCGC program enrollees (see Figures 6 and 7). Overall, 77% of the SCGC students were in seventh through ninth grade. Almost all (96%) were between the ages of 14 and 17. Total SCGC program enrollment for 1989-90 reached 1252. Due to differences in data collection, enrollment at ALC (N=537) is expressed as a duplicated count, while enrollment at GBH (N=715) is expressed as an unduplicated count.

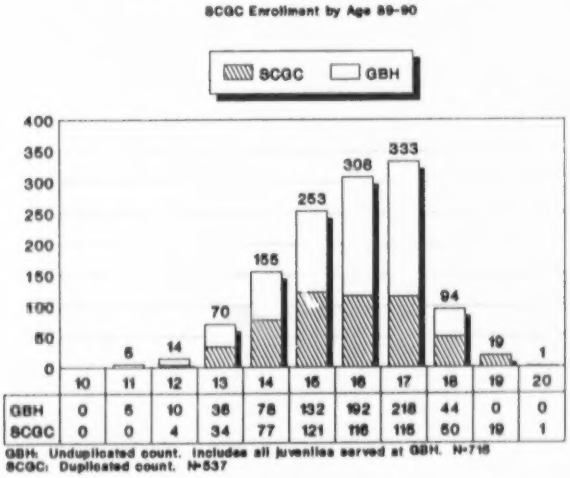
FIGURE 6
SCGC ENROLLMENT BY GRADE



	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
GBH	0	6	38	87	105	134	52	11	1
SCGC	0	0	52	86	127	213	37	18	5

GBH: Unduplicated count. Includes only AISD students served at GBH. N=434
SCGC: Duplicated count. N=537

FIGURE 7
SCGC ENROLLMENT BY AGE



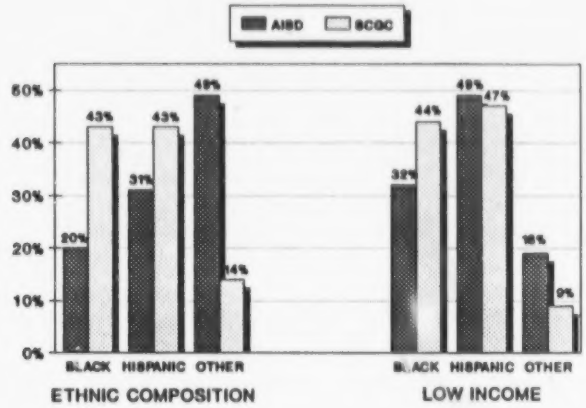
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
GBH	0	5	10	36	78	132	192	218	44	0	0
SCGC	0	0	4	34	77	121	116	115	50	19	1

GBH: Unduplicated count. Includes all juveniles served at GBH. N=715
SCGC: Duplicated count. N=537

LOW-INCOME STATUS AND ETHNICITY

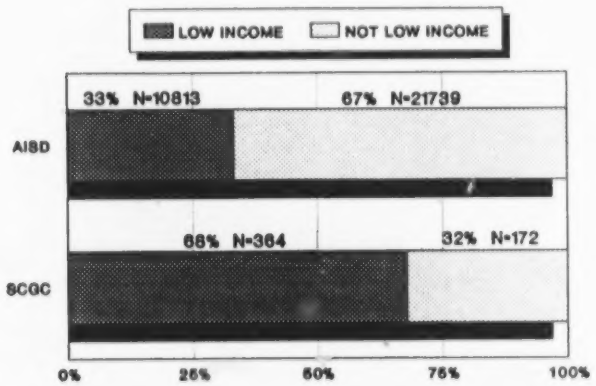
During 1989-90, 81% of SCGC enrollment was minority students, about the same as last year (see Swanson, 1989). This contrasts with 51% minority students districtwide in the same grades. Referral to SCGC is related to income status; among low-income students, Blacks are more likely, nonminority less likely, and Hispanics about equally as likely as students districtwide to be referred to SCGC. See Figure 8.

FIGURE 8
LOW-INCOME STATUS AND ETHNICITY
AISD AND SCGC, 1989-90



Overall, about two in three (68%) SCGC students at the ALC are low income, compared to one in three (33%) districtwide in the same grades (see Figure 9). Students are considered low income if they or their siblings qualify for free or reduced-priced meals.

FIGURE 9
LOW-INCOME STATUS (OVERALL)
SCGC AND AISD, 1989-90



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DISCIPLINE REFERRALS

Students are referred to the ALC program for a wide variety of behavior problems, ranging from assault to vandalism (see Figure 10). For evaluation purposes, from one to four referral reasons are noted for each student. Rates of referral for insubordination and truancy showed the greatest increase compared to 1988-89, while a decline was noted in referrals for excessive tardiness.

Insubordination typically occurs in combination with other referral reasons. More than half (58%) of the discipline referrals include references to this problem. Because it is so widespread, this category bears a closer look. Referral histories typical of insubordinate students include the following comments:

- Refuses to do any work in the classroom,
- Talks back and defies authority,
- Completely out of control,
- Walks out of class, and
- No interventions worked.

It should be noted that the ALC does not assign students to these categories. Student referral reasons are established by the home schools.

FIGURE 10
DISCIPLINE REFERRAL REASONS

REFERRAL REASON	FREQUENCY* 1988-89		1989-90		% POINT CHANGE
Insubordination	229	42%	310	58%	+16
Truancy	129	24%	196	36%	+1
Fighting	136	25%	154	29%	+4
Obscene Language	80	15%	111	21%	+6
Detention Violations	44	8%	54	10%	+2
Miscellaneous	40	7%	44	8%	+1
Assault	42	8%	42	8%	0
Weapons Possession/Use	34	6%	36	7%	+2
Theft	38	7%	35	7%	0
Drugs/Alcohol	36	7%	38	7%	0
Vandalism	28	5%	28	5%	0
Unexcused Absences	8	1%	23	4%	+3
Excessive Tardiness	33	6%	17	3%	-3
Arson	2	0.4%	6	1%	+0.6
Gambling	0	0	4	0.7%	+0.7
Possession of Fireworks	0	0	2	0.4%	+0.4
Total Number of Students	**N=546**		**N=537**		

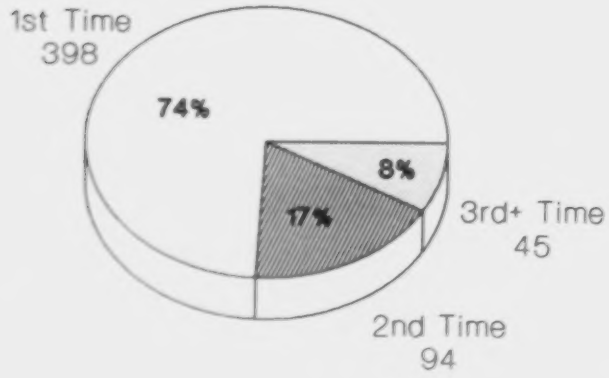
* Duplicated count of SCGC students served at the ALC. Individual students may have up to 4 referral reasons. Percentages will not sum to 100.

REPEAT REFERRALS

About one in six SCGC students (17%) at the Ridgeview campus had been there once before. A small percentage (8%) had been there three or more times (see Figure 11).

FIGURE 11
SCGC RECIDIVISM, 1989-90

Total N=537

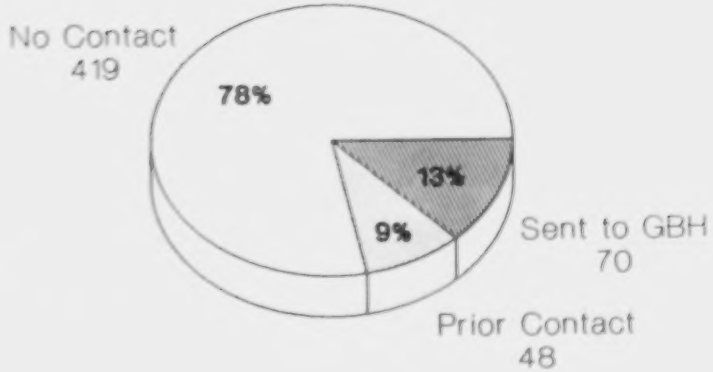


DELINQUENCY

Some SCGC students (N=70) were detained at GBH, the Travis County Juvenile Justice Center, during their semester of enrollment at the ALC (see Figure 12). In addition, 48 students at the Ridgeview campus reported prior contact with the court system, a total of 118 (22%) of SCGC students with a history of delinquency. The numbers of self-reported prior contact are likely underreported.

FIGURE 12
SCGC JUVENILE CONTACT, 1989-90

Total N=537



PROJECT SPECIALISTS

JOB DESCRIPTION

According to the 1989-90 SCGC proposal, the responsibilities of the campus-based project specialists are:

- Checking on students' attendance regularly by visiting classes
- Providing follow-up assistance to ensure that students attend school by talking to parents when students are absent or tardy
- Involving parents in such activities as award programs, field trips, parents' night, and fund raising activities
- Establishing before or after school counseling or tutoring programs
- Providing recreation programs as incentives for completion of academic assignments
- Providing training in "citizenship skills" for the faculty of the project schools
- Encouraging positive student-teacher interaction by developing programs such as "adopt-a-kid"
- Monitoring discipline referrals by checking regularly with the school office
- Coordinating periodic meetings with a representative of the Travis County Juvenile Court to determine recidivism of targeted students
- Making home visits as needed
- Providing support to campus administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and agencies for the referral of problematic students to the program
- Discussing student progress and concerns with teachers and coordinating class schedules and homework assignments with tutors and remedial educators
- Working with students who are on probated suspensions
- Identifying presenters who are successful in their respective fields to serve as positive role models to students
- Counseling students individually and/or in small groups on a weekly basis in reference to vocational, personal, and academic concerns.

INNOVATIONS

Options Program

A new discussion group, the Options Program (see Attachment A), was introduced this year by the counseling staff. Anger reduction and social skills training were emphasized.

Attendance Contract

Truancy has emerged as a problem to be reckoned with. The incidence of student withdrawal for nonattendance is on the rise. In an effort to address this problem, the staff developed an attendance contract that explains the consequences that will ensue for students who are repeatedly truant (see Attachment B).

Behavioral Goal Setting

The 1989-90 school year saw a shift in emphasis during orientation from extensive academic testing to behavioral goal setting. See Attachment C for a sample form.

Honor Roll Receptions

In lieu of schoolwide awards assemblies, this year honor roll students were recognized at the end of each six-weeks grading period at a reception held just for them. Pizza and soft drinks were typical fare.

Substance Abuse Group

Problems with drugs and alcohol continue to involve a number of ALC students and their families. Funded by a grant from the Faulkner Center, a private substance abuse treatment center in Austin, the counseling staff this year led a discussion group on this topic in conjuction with a Faulkner Center counselor.

REFERRALS TO COMMUNITY AGENCIES

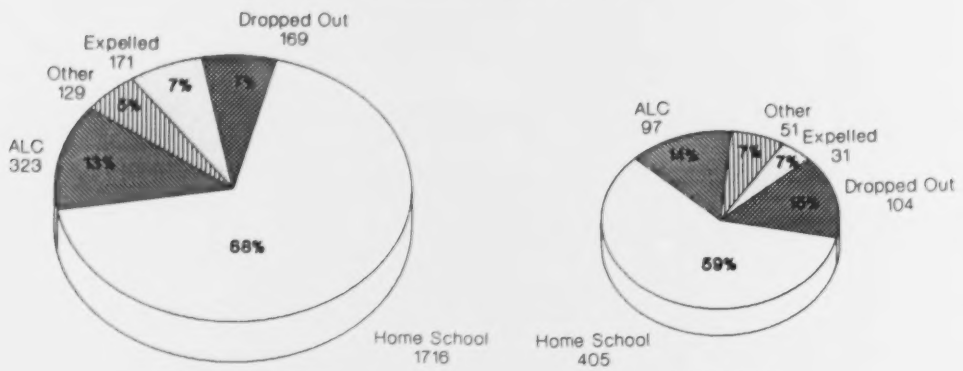
Project Specialists referred 550 ALC students (unduplicated count) and their families to other community agencies for assistance (see Attachment D). In 1989-90, the number of agencies totalled 33.

PROGRAM FOLLOW-UP

The status of ALC students at program exit has been gathered now for nine semesters. Figure 13 shows the status of all ALC students at the end of their semester of enrollment. The left pie chart shows the disposition of all ALC students from spring, 1985, to spring, 1990. On the right is the disposition for 1989-90. It is noteworthy that, overall, 68% were exited to their home school, 7% were expelled, and 7% dropped out while at ALC.

Looking at 1989-90 data only, the dropout rate by the end of the semester was 15%, an increase over 1988-89 (10%). The expulsion rate has decreased by almost half, going from 9% during 1988-89, to 5% this year.

FIGURE 13
END-OF-SEMESTER DISPOSITIONS
OF ALC STUDENTS 1985-1990



TWELVE-WEEK FOLLOW-UP

For evaluation purposes, TEA requires SCGC grant recipients to provide data on student attendance and grades during and after enrollment in ALC. Specifically, TEA requests data on students who meet these criteria:

- Attending the ALC for the first time,
- Reassigned to their home school at the end of the semester, and
- Still in school 12 weeks later.

During the 1989-90 school year, 117 students from spring semester, 1989, met these criteria, as well as 63 students from the fall semester, 1989. Follow-up data on students enrolled in SCGC in spring, 1990, will be available 12 weeks into the fall semester, 1990.

Figure 14 shows 12-week follow-up data sent to TEA. The average attendance rate for each student for the semester of attendance at the ALC was computed and compared to the average attendance rate for the 12 weeks following return to the home campus. An improvement of five days or more was considered "better," a decline of more than five days was considered "worse," and changes less than that amount were considered "no change." For grades, the average number of credits earned was contrasted for the semester of assignment and the 12-week follow-up period. An increase in the average number of credits earned was "better," a decline was "worse," and the same number was "no change." Trends suggest that attending the ALC had little effect on school performance and a negative effect on attendance. However, it should be noted that the purpose of the ALC is to continue the educational opportunities of students from their home schools.

FIGURE 14
TEA 12-WEEK FOLLOW-UP OF SCGC STUDENTS

ATTENDANCE

	Spring/Fall 1988		Spring/Fall 1989	
	N	%	N	%
Better	62	32%	62	34%
No Change	54	28%	41	23%
Worse	60	31%	77	43%
Incomplete Records	17	9%	0	0%
Total	N=193		N=180	

GRADES

	Spring/Fall 1988		Spring/Fall 1989	
	N	%	N	%
Better	67	35%	68	38%
No Change	40	21%	33	18%
Worse	73	38%	68	38%
Incomplete Records	13	7%	11	6%
Total	N=193		N=180	

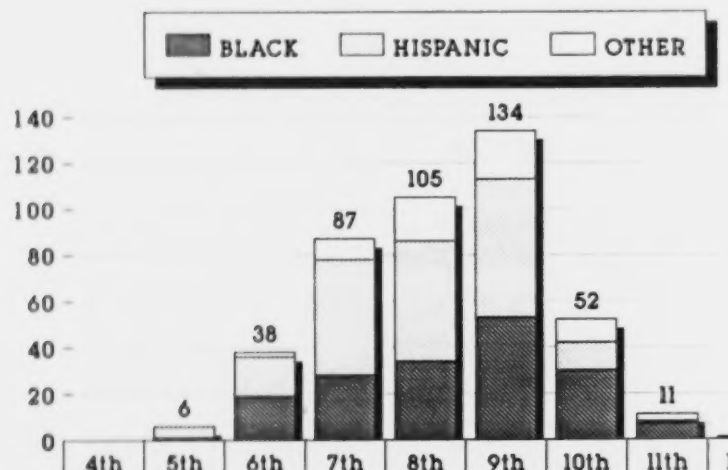
GARDNER-BETTS HOUSE

For the past two years, the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center, Gardner-Betts House (GBH) was located in temporary quarters on the grounds of Austin State Hospital. In the fall of 1989, GBH moved to its new facility. Juvenile offenders detained by the courts stay there while awaiting a court hearing. Afterward, depending on the outcome of their case, some may remain for varying lengths of time. During the 1989-90 school year, the shortest stay was one day, the longest 106 days, and the average stay was 6.03 days. This year, the number of juveniles served increased from 561 (1988-89) to 715 (1989-90), an increase of 27%.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The SCGC program at GBH provides the opportunity for continuity of school enrollment for delinquent AISD students. Figure 15 shows enrollment of AISD students by grade and ethnicity. In order to receive credit, a Texas student must attend at least 80 days per semester.

FIGURE 15
AISD STUDENTS AT GBH
BY GRADE AND ETHNICITY, 1989-90



	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
OTHER	0	0	2	9	19	21	10	3	0
HISPANIC	0	5	17	50	52	60	12	1	0
BLACK	0	1	19	28	34	53	30	7	1

NOTE: Unduplicated count. Includes only AISD students served at GBH. N=434

By placing an additional project specialist at GBH to implement an educational program, it is possible for students to receive attendance credit if they participate in the classes. When students are detained for two weeks or more, or if they express an interest in keeping up with assignments from their home schools, the Project Specialist can request a copy of the students' course work. Individual lesson plans are made for advanced students and those far behind the rest of the group. More than half of the students this year were enrolled in AISD (N=434, 60%). Another 101 (14%) reported enrollment in other school districts, and 180 (25%) were dropouts.

Career Education

Easy-to-read materials are available to students interested in learning about vocational choices. Periodically, a series of guest speakers discuss their occupations and the prerequisite training.

Life Skills

A program of films, discussions, and guest speakers from the community supplement the instructional program. Topics include family and financial planning, mental and physical health, and adolescent growth and development.

Recreation

Materials are available for students for arts and crafts and recreational activities are organized for the students.

Overall, however, detention is a stressful time for the students, and many are not capable of completing usual amounts of coursework.

PROBLEMS/SUGGESTIONS

Last year, the GBH student-teacher ratio (17:1) was found to be out of compliance with the recommendation of the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission: "When education services are provided in the detention facility, it is recommended that the teacher-student ratios not exceed one to ten...." This year, another project specialist was added to the staff in an attempt to rectify this understaffing. However, **due to the increased enrollment this year, the student-teacher ratio, now 15:1, remains out of compliance. An additional teacher will be required to maintain the recommended student-teacher ratio.**

OFFENSES

Juveniles were referred to SCGC at GBH for committing one or more of a wide variety of offenses. Figure 16 shows the frequencies of offenses, by category, for delinquents detained at GBH. **Burglary, theft, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, and violation of a court order were the most frequently mentioned offenses.** Note that this is a duplicated count as some juveniles were detained on multiple occasions.

FIGURE 16
GBH OFFENSES, 1989-90

OFFENSE	TOTAL FREQUENCY	ALC STUDENTS
Murder	3	0
Sexual Assault	12	0
Robbery	61	9
Assault	120	5
Kidnapping	4	1
Burglary	76	30
Theft	185	30
Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle	110	19
Escape From Detention	7	1
Possession/Use/Sale of Drugs/Alcohol	48	5
Forgery/ID/Credit Card Abuse	6	1
Possession of Weapon/Explosive	38	6
Hindering/Evading/Resisting Arrest	7	0
Disorderly Conduct	7	1
Leaving Scene of Accident	1	0
Arson	4	0
Criminal Mischief	24	4
Criminal Trespass	31	7
Violation of Parole	25	1
Violation of a Court Order	105	11
Failure to Appear	20	0
Runaway/Family Conflict	112	6
Public Intoxication	4	0
Inhalant Abuse	6	0
Violation of Immigration	1	0
Temporary Detention	16	1
TOTAL	**1144**	**244**

S U R V E Y R E S U L T S

STUDENT OPINIONS ABOUT THE ALC

A random sample of ALC students (both behavior referral and overage) in grades 9-12 (N=34)--about a third of the enrollment in those grades at that time--was surveyed in November, 1989, as part of the annual districtwide student survey. Figure 17 shows the extent to which students agreed with the following statements:

FIGURE 17
DISTRICTWIDE STUDENT SURVEY 1989

Item	N	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I want to stay another semester at the ALC.	34	6%	9%	85%
My behavior is better than last year now that I am at the ALC.	34	70%	21%	9%
I feel more confident about staying in school through graduation now that I am at the ALC.	34	61%	15%	24%
Teachers at the ALC have helped me to improve my grades.	34	76%	6%	18%
Compared to my home school, counselors at the ALC pay more attention to me as a person.	34	68%	23%	9%

Discussion

Results of the high school student survey indicate that, **in general, students believe that the SCGC program has had a beneficial effect on them.** About 7 in 10 respondents, both this year and last, agreed that their behavior and grades had improved at the ALC. The percentage of students who approved of the ALC counselors' more personal attention was much larger this year (68%) than last year (43%). Fewer students, however, reported that assignment to the ALC had made them more confident about staying in school through graduation; the percentage agreeing fell to 61% this year from 75% last year. In addition, the proportion of students who disagreed rose from 1 in 20 last year to 1 in 4 this year.

Responses to another question indicate fewer students want to stay at the ALC another semester this year (6%) than last (10%). Or, taking a different perspective, more than 8 in 10 students want to leave the ALC at the end of the semester this year, compared to 7 in 10 last year. This finding is not entirely unexpected because the ALC program is part of the District's discipline system that removes behavior problem students from their home campuses and places them in a structured, alternative setting for about one semester.

EMPLOYEE OPINIONS ABOUT THE ALC

Opinions about the ALC program were surveyed in a random sample of secondary teachers, administrators, and other campus professionals as part of the spring, 1990, districtwide employee survey. The number of valid responses to individual questions ranged from 510 to 534. Figure 18 shows selected responses to the survey questions:

FIGURE 18
DISTRICTWIDE EMPLOYEE SURVEY, 1990

Students who have returned to this campus from the ALC have a more positive attitude about self and school now than before they went.

EMPLOYEE GROUP	N	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Don't Know
TEACHERS	481	11%	27%	22%	40%
OTHER PROFESSIONAL STAFF	25	16%	32%	44%	8%
ADMINISTRATORS	28	25%	54%	18%	4%

Students who have returned to this campus from the ALC are less disruptive now than they were before their reassignment.

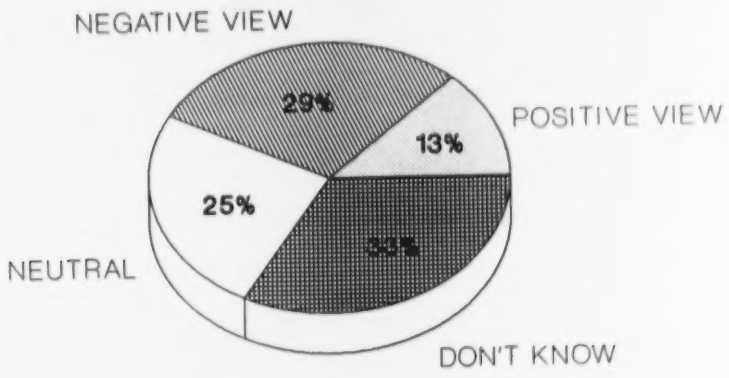
EMPLOYEE GROUP	N	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Don't Know
TEACHERS	464	11%	34%	23%	32%
OTHER PROFESSIONAL STAFF	29	34%	41%	14%	10%
ADMINISTRATORS	29	24%	41%	24%	10%

The program at the ALC was beneficial in preparing students to return to our campus

EMPLOYEE GROUP	N	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Don't Know
TEACHERS	454	12%	25%	25%	37%
OTHER PROFESSIONAL STAFF	34	35%	12%	47%	6%
ADMINISTRATORS	22	23%	32%	41%	4%

Taking a broader perspective on these findings, Figure 19 shows overall opinions about the ALC program for these three survey questions combined. More than twice as many employees disagreed with the above survey statements (29%) than agreed (13%). Half (55%) had no opinion; of these, 25% were neutral and 33% said they did not know. The ALC is a small program that serves just a few hundred secondary students, and its structure and purpose may not be widely known on the regular campuses.

FIGURE 19
OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF THE ALC PROGRAM



Another survey question addressed follow-up issues:

"What special attention or services are you providing to ALC students entering your campus spring semester?"

The four services most frequently cited by teachers, counselors, and administrators combined were:

- WINGS intervention specialists,
- Special orientation with counselors and administrators,
- Extra individual counseling, and
- Student PAL assignment.

In addition, almost 4 in 10 respondents (38% of 409) reported there were no ALC students entering their campuses spring semester. This is an interesting finding, in that both in 1988-89 and 1989-90, students have been sent to the ALC from every high school and middle school in the District. There may be two explanations for this discrepant perception. Perhaps the staff surveyed did not know (1) that their school had sent students to the ALC for the fall semester, or (2) that students usually remain at the ALC for one semester only.

PROGRAM COSTS

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) support program at the Ridgeview campus and GBH was funded by a $100,000 grant from the Texas Education Agency. The budget for the 1989-90 school year was divided as follows: $23,422 for Gardner-Betts House, $58,553 for the ALC, $14,327 for evaluation, $50 for management and $3,648 for summer school.

GBH served a large number of students (715) for a short period of time (average detention of 6.03 days), while the ALC's 537 SCGC students generally stayed until the end of the semester of enrollment. The cost per student was $33 at GBH and $109 at the ALC. (The number of students served in summer school is not yet available.)

REFERENCES

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ATTACHMENT A

Alternative Learning Center
Options Program
Student Agreement
1989-90

STUDENT AGREEMENT

I agree to participate in a personal social skills class called OPTIONS. This class is designed to teach skills that will help me be more successful at school and in the community.

While participating in OPTIONS I agree to comply with the following class rules:

I will sit appropriately in my chair.
I will listen attentively to the trainers when they introduce the skill and model it.
I will contribute in a positive manner to group discussions.
I will participate in role-plays.
I will give constructive feedback to my classmates.
I will complete my practice assignments.

During the class, I will periodically grade myself using a scale of 0-4. These grades will indicate how well I believe I followed the class rules and how well my behavior met the trainers' expectation for appropriate class behavior. In addition to the points earned, I will receive bonus points if the grade I award myself is within one point of the grade the trainer has awarded.

If I earn enough points, I will periodically be eligible for reinforcers.

The OPTIONS program has been explained to me by one of the trainers and my signature indicates my willingness to participate.

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89.28

ATTACHMENT B

Alternative Learning Center
Attendance Contract
1989-90

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER

800 NEAL STREET
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78702
477-8010

The following strategies were implemented prior to initiating this contract: student conferences, parent phone calls, parent/administrator/student conference, and/or home visit(s).

_____ continues to be absent from school without parent/guardian permission.

STUDENT CONTRACT

I, _____, understand that continued truancy and/or leaving campus without permission will lead to my expulsion from the Alternative Learning Center for the remainder of semester.

_____
Student Date

_____
Counselor Date

Ruby L. Handcox
_____
Ruby L. Handcox, Principal Date

ATTACHMENT C

Alternative Learning Center
Goal Setting Form
1989-90

GOAL-SETTING FORM 3

Date _____

Long-range goal _____

_____

_____

Short-range goals _____

_____

_____

_____

Things I will do in the next week to begin reaching my goals

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Evaluation

_____

_____

ATTACHMENT D

**Community Agencies
Utilized by SCGC
1989-90**

Austin Area Urban League
Austin Child Guidance and Evaluation Center
Austin Community College
Austin Police Department - Victim Services and
Hispanic Crimes Unit
Austin Rehabilitation Center (ARC)
Austin Rehabilitation Center for
Independent Living (ARCIL)
Austin State Hospital
Center for the Development of Education & Nutrition
Center for Battered Women
Charter Lane Hospital
Child and Family Services
Children's Protective Services
Christian Social Mission
Community Advocates for Teens and Parents
Creative Rapid Learning Center
Delinquency Prevention Division, Juvenile Court
Faulkner Center
Gary Job Corps
Huston-Tillotson College
Mental Health - Mental Retardation
Middle Earth Summer Program
Pebble Project, Child Abuse Center
Planned Parenthood of Austin
Rape Crisis Center
Reproductive Services
Jobs for Progress
South Austin Youth Services
Spectrum Emergency Shelter
St. Edward's Job Fair
State of Texas Department of Health
Travis County Health Department
Youth Advocacy Program
Youth Employment Services

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